



Reclaim



THE MOST
IMPORTANT
BIKE RACK IN
NEW YORK CITY

NYC

AND OTHER SIGNS THAT
THE CITY COUNCIL IS
SERIOUS ABOUT SAFE
STREETS

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

The Real People's Crossing



TILIKUM CROSSING IS PORTLAND'S NEXT BIG THING. SO WHAT'S COMING TO NEW YORK?

IT'S TIME FOR SOME STRAIGHT TALK: I'm sick of hearing about Portland, Oregon.

As a bearded lefty Brooklynite who rides a bike, bakes his own bread and has a vat of homebrew vinegar aging in his apartment, you might assume that I feel a certain affinity for that quaint little burg in the Pacific Northwest. But on my last trip there, I couldn't wait to come home to New York City.

I don't mean to bash Portland. (Did you know its population is roughly equivalent to the number of New Yorkers who take a cab each day?) And I certainly don't want to suggest that my urge to flee was the fault of my hosts. My friends at the Bicycle Transportation Alliance were generous and kind and as welcoming as a safe-streets advocate could hope. The local congressman, Rep. Earl Blumenauer, who's often called a "bicycle evangelist," even took time out of his busy

schedule to show me around. That, in fact, is where the trouble started.

After a breakfast filled with shoptalk —about his effort to raise the federal gas tax, T.A.'s work on Vision Zero, New York's new mayor, DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg and even Portlandia ("I thought it was a documentary!" Rep. Blumenauer told me with a smile), we headed down to the banks of the Willamette River, where the city is building the nation's largest car-free bridge, the Tilikum Crossing.

"This is the next big thing," the congressman told me.

The "People's Crossing," as boosters have taken to calling it, accommodates trains, streetcars, buses, bikes and pedestrians. It's a monument to Portland's transportation priorities. And standing in its shadow with the congressman who helped make it a reality, all I could think

about was how more Brooklynites live on both sides of Atlantic Avenue than Portlandians on either side of that river. The same is true of Queens Boulevard and Westchester Avenue and 125th Street and a handful of other big New York City thoroughfares that can be every bit as harrowing to cross as a swollen waterway.

Size comparisons aside, what Congressman Blumenauer and the city of Portland are trying to do is connect people. That's the right idea, and car-free infrastructure is certainly a fine way of making that happen. In New York City, however, we're not about to build a bike bridge over Houston Street. Instead, we're going to have to use New York ingenuity to make what we've got work even better to connect people. That's our next big thing.

So what is the best way to improve what we have? It's not simply the subway



system. With the dismal status of state support, it will be a challenge to keep the service we have. Nor is it just more buses or ferries or driverless cars or even bikes. The best way to connect New Yorkers is by transforming our city's 650 miles of big arterial streets. Today, 90 percent of our avenues and boulevards are indistinguishable from big streets in any other U.S. city. There are lots of wide car lanes that encourage fast driving, and on-street parking spots that add a layer of complexity and danger. In the densest and most pedestrian-rich city in the country, these streets should reflect how New Yorkers actually travel. That means real bus lanes, bike lanes and plenty of pedestrian space.

Two centuries ago, when Portland was in short pants and Lewis and Clark were still tired from their expedition, New York was busy laying down a street grid that reflected how people moved: by foot, on horses and aboard ships. Seventy-five years later, we started building bridges. Then came tunnels for the subway and elevated train tracks and land reclamation for highway projects until almost every inch of the city was spoken

for and filled with people going places. That's where we are now, so a nice new bridge seems about as likely as a good price for the one that connects City Hall to Brooklyn.

That's why our next big thing needs to make the most of what we have. It has to balance Robert Moses's roads with Simeon De Witt's street grid and Citi Bike's stations. It needs to connect car-free commuters with new job centers in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx, and it needs to make sure that everyone can get around safely and speedily and with the sort of status that New Yorkers deserve.

That's our people's crossing, and it's not just some bridge over some river in the Pacific Northwest. It's a whole new way of thinking about transportation in the greatest city in the world.

Sincerely,

Paul Steely White
Executive Director

Our mission is to reclaim New York City's streets from the automobile, and to advocate for bicycling, walking and public transit as the best transportation alternatives.

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BIKE NEWS

Milestones



Stephen Miller/StreetsBlog

VISION ZERO WORKSHOPS

For years, Transportation Alternatives has helped empower neighborhood activists and concerned citizens to change their streets for the better, but in the past few months this grassroots approach has gotten the imprimatur of City Hall. As part of its Vision Zero program, the de Blasio administration has held more than 20 public workshops in all five boroughs. Community board members, agency officials, local politicians and thousands of engaged New Yorkers interested in making their streets and city safer have identified problems, shared solutions and worked to find consensus. In the coming months and years, this impressive ground game will not only ensure that communities have had a say in their streetscape, but also that the City has taken time to listen to and learn from the local experts who know what's best.

Continue the conversation @VisionZeroNYC



LAFAYETTE BIKE LANE

One of Manhattan's most popular bike lanes—which cuts through some of the city's most stylish neighborhoods—just got a bike facility befitting its ridership numbers and cool enough to keep pace with its trendy location. The new Lafayette Street bike lane, which runs from Prince Street in SoHo to 12th Street just south of Union Square, is a bright green parking-protected lane that, like its predecessors around the city, will help keep cyclists, pedestrians and drivers safer and boost local retail sales. According to a DOT study of 8th and 9th avenues, protected bike lanes can reduce injuries to all street users by up to 68 percent and boost retail sales by as much as 49 percent.



Cassandra Giraldo

THE POWER OF A BIKE NETWORK

When is a bike lane not a bike lane? When it's part of a network. As valuable as standalone cycling infrastructure can be, a bike lane's true worth is best measured as part of a comprehensive system that connects neighborhood destinations to the city as a whole. T.A. has been saying as much for years, and now the City is really listening. A large portion of the agency's newly planned—and soon-to-be-built—bike facilities are integrated networks, making local trips easier and long commutes simpler. Long Island City in Queens and Inwood in Manhattan are scheduled to see big improvements this year and sources say other neighborhoods—particularly around the Harlem River in the Bronx—will see significant changes soon.



Harbor Ring



REMEMBERING STEVE FAUST

New York City lost one of its great bike advocates this spring. Steve Faust, a longtime T.A. member who helped bring bike access to the East River bridges, passed away in late March. An urban planner and engineer by training, Steve pushed for better bicycle infrastructure in New York City for the better part of four decades. From the late 1970s, when he served on former Mayor Ed Koch's bicycle committee, to the months before his passing, when his long-held dream of bike access to the Verrazano Bridge was a driving passion, Steve tirelessly pressed for commonsense improvements that would benefit generations of New Yorkers. Transportation Alternatives and the entire bike community will be forever grateful for his commitment and support.





COMMUTER PROFILE

Doria Tenca

How old are you? I'm 78.

And you were born and raised in the city? Absolutely. I grew up on 77th Street.

When did you start biking? I started to bike when I was a kid. I rode in Central Park. When I went to City College, I brought my bike there, but something was broken so I never really unpacked it. I started riding again regularly in the 1960s. Maybe 1963. I worked as a computer programmer and rode to my office. People thought I was such a kook. My aunt said she didn't want to know me when I was on my bike.

How long have you been a T.A. member? I've been a member since just about when T.A. started, but there's

more backstory. In the 1960s, biking to work, I thought it was me against the world, but one day someone put a flier on my desk—it was 1970. It was a flier for a group called Bike for a Better City, and it said there would be a rally at 59th Street by the Plaza Hotel to bike to work and to raise awareness about bikes and bike lanes. I went there and saw a thousand cyclists. It was the first thing on the six o'clock news that night. After that, we'd meet every Thursday and bike to work together. I started to volunteer—I sold buttons and stickers. It was popular for a while but the numbers started to dwindle and a few years later, there were just three of us on Thursday mornings. One of them was Roger Herz [another longtime T.A. member]. He told me about a new group called Trans-

portation Alternatives. That's when I joined. Maybe it was 1975.

Over the years, you've volunteered a lot. What have you done with T.A.?

In the late 1970s, we started pushing to get cars out of Central Park. I collected a lot of petition signatures. I'd walk around, stop people, ask people by the tennis courts. I always had my clipboard. I've also been to lots of mailing parties and attended tons of great T.A. events over the years.

What keeps you engaged? I believe in T.A.'s work, and I've seen firsthand how impactful it is. I remember when cabs would literally run you off the road and when the idea of a car-free Central Park or a pedestrian plaza or even a bike lane was unthinkable. This city has changed because of T.A. and that means it has changed because of T.A. members.

You recently made a very generous contribution to T.A. Can you tell me what prompted you to give? Well, I believe in supporting causes I care about. That's why I gave to T.A., but I was able to give because I was hit and injured by a truck while crossing East 96th Street a few years ago. I was in the crosswalk with the light and a truck hit me and knocked me down. I received a settlement and used that to establish a charitable gift annuity with both Transportation Alternatives and the Central Park Conservancy, another organization that is close to my heart. The gift annuity is good for me and good for T.A.

Well, thank you for your gift and for supporting T.A. for so many years. I have one more question: Can you tell me about that tee-shirt? It's maybe the last of the first T.A. tee-shirts — an original from 1975. I only wear it on special occasions. I like the One Less Car tee-shirts, too — because I don't like cars much—but this old one is my favorite. ■



BIKE NEWS

Teething, Crying and Big Steps in Citi Bike's First Year

CITI BIKE CELEBRATED ITS FIRST birthday last month by offering one dollar rides and announcing to naysayers, supporters and everyone in between that—despite a year filled with challenges—New York's newest public transit system managed to balance its budget. And it did it with no government money, while quietly racking up 8.75 million trips that covered 14.7 million miles.

Impressive as those numbers are, they're far from the whole story. A series of early troubles—from Hurricane Sandy-related flooding to software glitches to legal challenges to management issues to logistical hurdles—occasionally cast a shadow over the first year of the City's newest public transit option, but there's sunshine on the horizon.

Most notably, Citi Bike remains wildly popular. There are more than 100,000 annual members of the program. On a beautiful day, it can easily attract upwards of 35,000 customers—outpacing esti-

mates many times over. And with the weather warming and tourist season in full swing, those numbers are sure to surge.

The big blue bikes have also become a staple of New York City's streetscape, as iconic as yellow cabs, hot dog carts and Helvetica subway signage. Despite some early grumblings that they'd disrupt the character of historic neighborhoods, Citi Bikes are now at home wherever there's a docking station. Not even the Plaza Hotel—which filed a lawsuit to have a dock across the street removed—could convince a judge that Citi Bikes weren't perfectly suitable for New York City's streets.

The program also seems set to grow. Several news outlets have reported that Related Companies, a massive New York-based real estate developer known for taking on projects that involve working closely with the City, is interested in funding the program's expansion to new neighborhoods.

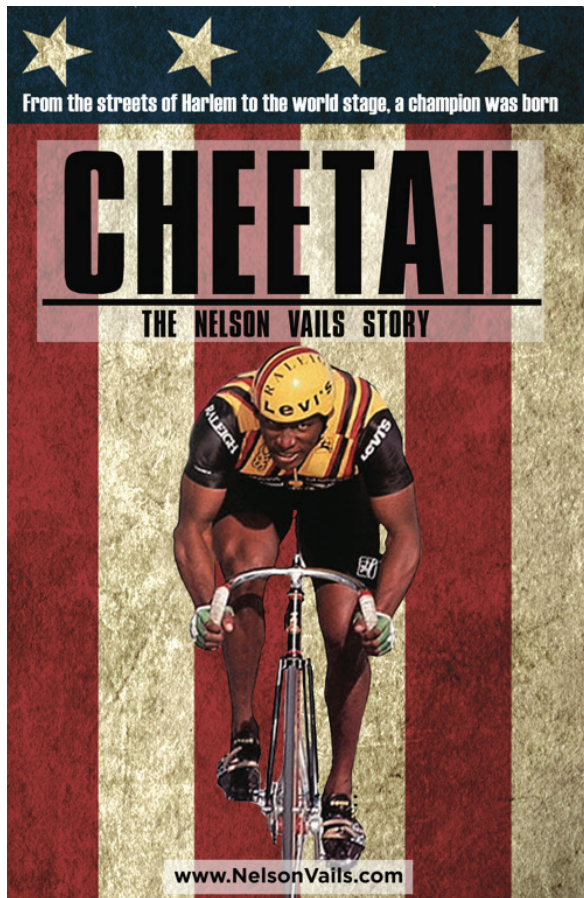
According to the *Wall Street Journal*, "It was unclear how much capital REQX Ventures might invest or what kind of stake in the Citi Bike program the company might get in return. It remains to be seen whether the two sides would close the deal, or whether City officials would approve it."

Despite the ongoing negotiation, news of a new funding source has folks in the know feeling good. Caroline Samponaro, T.A.'s Senior Director of Campaigns and Organizing, said, "Citi Bike had an awesome first year, despite some serious challenges. It's a good system with incredible ridership numbers in the greatest city in the world. It's got opportunity written all over it."

Mayor de Blasio agrees. On Citi Bike's birthday, he told reporters, "The fact is, it's been a success," adding, "I said all along I want to see it expanded to more parts of the city." ■

COMMUTER PROFILE

Nelson “The Cheetah” Vails



NELSON VAILS HAS WORN A LOT OF hats in his exceptional life. He was the youngest of ten children growing up in a Harlem housing project, a New York City bicycle messenger working to support his family, an Olympic silver medalist in track cycling, a TV commentator, a youth biking advocate and, most recently, the subject of a stunning documentary, *Cheetah: The Nelson Vails Story*.

When did you start riding? I learned to ride with training wheels at the age of six. Some friends and I from the neighborhood formed a little bike club—we didn’t realize it was a club until later—and we’d ride around Harlem together.

When did you start working as a bike messenger? I started in the late 70s and worked two years as a full-time messenger. That was in the early days of bike messenger services. I was what

was called an “OD”—an “original dime.” We didn’t have cell phones, just pay phones, so you’d drop in a dime and call the dispatcher to find out where your next delivery was. Everyone used messengers back in the day. If you worked, you got paid, and it was good money.

Do you feel like working as a messenger helped develop your racing career?

Definitely. I was getting paid to ride every day and riding in that fast-paced environment taught me skills that I could never have learned from a coach or from a book. Anyone riding in New York City knows what I’m talking about! That acuteness stays with you forever, no matter where you’re riding. I live in Southern California now and that heightened sense

of awareness and confidence is with me when I ride in traffic to this day, even when I’m biking on the beach.

How did you transition from the daily grind of working as a bike messenger to an Olympic-level athlete?

For a while I was riding seven days a week. I worked as a messenger Monday through Friday and rode amateur races on the weekend. I started riding with the Century Road Club Association and eventually met people like Lenny Preheim—owner of TOGA Bike Shop at that time—and an older gentleman named Fred Mangione (who’s still riding around Central Park to this day). They helped coach me and build my career. I’d race at the Kissena Velodrome in Queens on Thursdays and then at the T-Town Velodrome in Pennsylvania on Fridays. Eventually that training and support led me all the way to the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Standing on the podium at the 1984 Olympic Games—as the first African-American cyclist to ever win an Olympic medal—what was going through your mind? There was a huge sense of accomplishment. So many people played a part in me reaching that goal. From family, friends, coaching staff and even the people who served me food in the dining hall when I was training—those people know who they are.

Your story has inspired a lot of bicyclists. Who inspired you? My dad. He’s a cool dude. He supported me in whatever I did and played a big role in my development as an athlete. He encouraged me through the way he communicated. The emphasis was on “we” rather than on “you.”

What advice do you have for young cyclists in New York City? My advice to kids is to respect the real and respect your elders. Always be humble for what you have. Even if you’re not well off, living in NYC you have opportunities that a lot of others don’t have. That, and bikes will take them places if they stay on the straight and narrow. It has done it for me, and it can for you, too. I work with a nonprofit based in the Bronx called I Challenge Myself. They encourage city kids to ride, but they do a lot more than that, too.

Your racing career has given you opportunities to travel and ride all over the world. How do you think New York City stacks up as a “bike-friendly” city? I’m very proud of the work Transportation Alternatives has done to bring Citi Bike to New York City. I know bike share is in other cities, but it gets put to its best use here in NYC. I’m looking forward to riding a Citi Bike on this visit. ■



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THE SIT-DOWN

Charles Montgomery

Your new book, *Happy City*, examines how urban design impacts our lives. What are the origins of that idea?

In 2007, I traveled to Bogotá, Colombia and took a bike ride with Enrique Peñalosa, the former mayor and livable-cities evangelist. For me, it was a life changing experience. First off, it was a hair-raising adventure chasing this guy around his city, always on a bike, but more importantly, he was insisting that he had used his short time in office to transform Bogotá in the name of happiness. He

claimed that he had used design to make citizens happier. That was such a compelling message and yet, being a journalist, I left the city skeptical. Could the city really be a machine for happiness? Could we redesign places, buildings, streets and systems to maximize happiness? I wanted evidence. I became obsessed with the notion and started looking for evidence both in urban experiments around the world and in the so-called science of happiness, in behavioral economics, psychology and neuroscience.

So what did you find out? What makes a happy city?

The most powerful ingredient of human happiness is that mix of positive social connections with family, with friends, even with acquaintances and strangers. That's what gives our lives richness, that's what keeps us strong, that's what keeps us healthy, that's what gets us through hard times and that, more than anything, is what gives our lives meaning and joy. So what makes a happy city is design and policy that creates healthy,

active lifestyles, that makes a city more fair, that maximizes fun and minimizes hardship, that makes a place safe and supports a thriving economy. But the element that binds them all is social: A social city is a happy city.

What does that mean in terms of a city's design?

I found pretty strong evidence both in the heroic and sometimes tragic stories of American commuters, as well as in research on the power of place, that the way we design our streets, our public places and our transportation systems influences how we feel, how we behave and how we treat other people in ways that most of us never realize. So, examples: When I worked in New York City with the BMW Guggenheim lab, we tested the emotional effect of streetscapes on the Lower East Side. I worked with a neuroscientist named Colin Ellard. We tested both the self-reported happiness effects of a place, as well as people's

"THE WAY WE DESIGN OUR STREETS, OUR PUBLIC PLACES AND OUR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS INFLUENCES HOW WE FEEL."

physical responses tracked through skin conductance cuffs. We found a couple of things: Number one, people were happiest when exposed to nature. We didn't dump them in the wilderness, but even small splashes of wilderness on city

streets—trees, landscaping—cheered them up. But I think more significantly, we found that people were much happier along a block of old tenement-style street frontage with lots going on—doors, windows, bars, cafes. People were much happier there than along a block that had been rebuilt using Modernist principles to feature a big box Whole Foods with only two openings on the entire block.

How does transportation fit in to the happy city equation?

The most glaring effect that cities have on our social lives involves dispersal. In the book, there's a chart that shows the relationship between commute times and happiness. It's very simple: The longer your commute, the less happy you are. People who endure more than a 45-minute commute are actually more than 40 percent more likely to divorce. This influences not just our internal life but our home life. It strikes me as so tragic that the wealthiest economies on the planet have produced urban systems that steal time and ease from people's lives and that corrode their relationships. That said, I'm interested in not just efficiency of transportation systems, but how they feel. If we don't pay attention to how it feels to move, then we'll never get urban mobility right. We all make choices based on what we think will makes us happy. Surveys around the world show that people who walk or bike to work experience more joy and less fear, rage and sadness than all other commuters. Driving comes second and transit comes last. Now transit—it's no surprise that it comes in last because in most cities, transit is still treated as a handout to the unworthy poor. It's underfunded, it's slower and buses almost always have to wait behind the most inefficient vehicle on the road—the private car. What I find curious is the fact that something like only one or two in 100 Americans bikes or walks to school. Now, if an activity is clearly the most efficient at producing happiness, why aren't more people doing it? The answer is pretty simple: Our cities design our behavior. In the dispersed city,

which most people call sprawl—where all functions are separated by miles and miles—the distances are too great. That's why the same person living in suburban Atlanta is likely to weigh ten pounds more than if they lived in Mid-

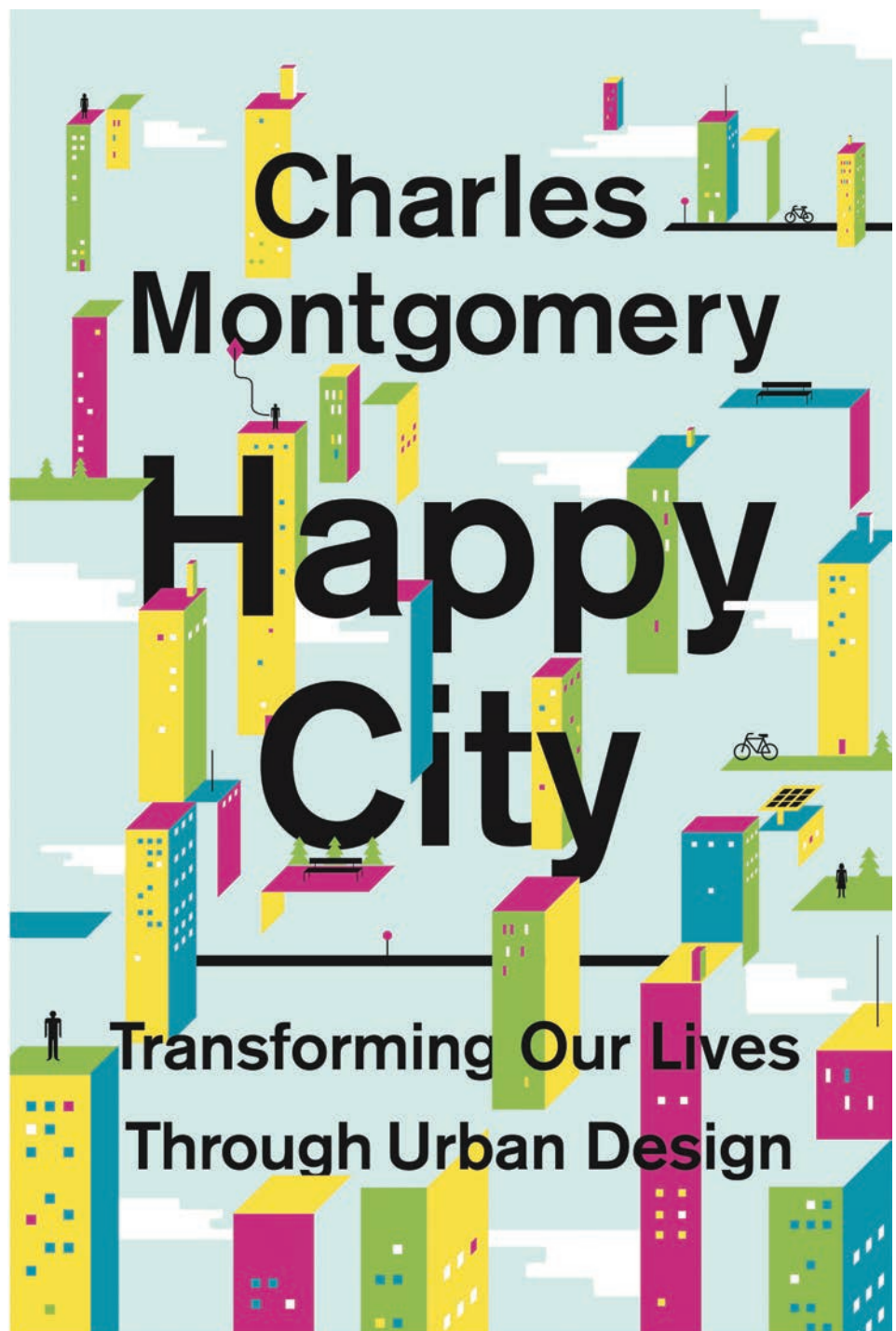
"RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT SOMETHING LIKE 60 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION IS INTERESTED IN CYCLING BUT FEELS IT'S TOO SCARY OR UNCOMFORTABLE TO DO."

town Atlanta, a connected, mixed-use, walkable, old-style neighborhood. But even in central cities, few people are biking. The voices from motordom suggest that there just isn't that much interest in cycling. We have to call bullshit on them. Research has shown that something like 60 percent of the population is interested in cycling but feels it's too scary or uncomfortable to do. That means biking on an open road is too scary, biking on a painted bike lane is too scary, biking on a sharrow is too scary. Biking on a safe, separated bike lane is comfortable, but it is also too scary if you don't complete the network. If I have a two-mile journey to make by bike and one of those miles is on a protected bike lane and one of the miles isn't, then the journey is still too scary. Until we can design our cities in ways that respond to the basic psychology of moving, then people aren't going

to move differently. We are stealing freedom from children, from older people, from anyone who doesn't feel like driving.

Your book has received a lot of attention. It's been excerpted in a stack of magazines and newspapers, you've done a great deal of interviews, and I imagine it's selling well. Now, it's a very good read, but do you attribute the success to anything else? Have you tapped into a certain zeitgeist?

I think it's pretty simple, actually. Even people who claim not to like cities tend to live in them. We all have a sense that, as Enrique told me years ago, we need to build cities differently. We now have an opportunity to do that. We know that American cities will grow by 100 million people in the next 40 years. How are those people going to live? How are our systems going to configure our urban lives? Now is a chance for people who care about their cities and who care about the future and who care about happiness itself to get involved and help shape the city of the future. What I tried to do in *Happy City* was make an invitation. Our cities are malleable. They can change. And all of us can play a part in that change. I think your organization, Transportation Alternatives, provides a terrific inspiration in other cities. When I speak in cities around the world, they point to New York City and say, "Isn't it great what Bloomberg did to transform the streets?" I tell them, "You shouldn't just credit Bloomberg: those changes happened because of a concerted, heartfelt and cunning grassroots campaign led by Transportation Alternatives and its allies." It's you who put the pressure on Bloomberg, it's you who invited neighbors around the city to take ownership of their streets. I think if people in other cities saw what really happened in New York City, they would be in awe of T.A. and its community. ■



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THE MOST IMPORTANT BIKE RACK IN NEW YORK CITY

AND OTHER SIGNS THAT THE CITY COUNCIL IS SERIOUS ABOUT SAFE STREETS

AT THE RIGHT HOUR, ON THE right day, a careful observer can peek through the wrought-iron fence that surrounds City Hall to find a flock of besuited men and women wrestling their bicycles into a long black rack. “There isn’t enough room, so we all scramble to get there first,” said Council Member Helen Rosenthal, who represents Manhattan’s Upper West Side.

Bike parking, according to Noah Budnick, is a new problem at City Hall. As Transportation Alternatives’ Deputy Director and most senior staffer, he’d never even heard of a bike rack inside the building’s gates, let alone complaints from Council members and their staff that there’s not enough room.

But when there’s an event that draws Council Member Rosenthal or Council Member Antonio Reynoso or Council Member Carlos Menchaca or Council Member Ben Kallos or another of the

building’s everyday commuter cyclists, the lone bike rack at City Hall—like lots of bike racks around the city these days—can’t keep up with demand.

“We’ve all been emailing; advocating for more bike parking inside the gates,” Council Member Rosenthal said. “The Sergeant at Arms is being incredibly helpful,” she added.

This is the state of cycling in New York City. The five boroughs aren’t yet Amsterdam, but elected officials and their staffs are advocating amongst themselves to get more bike parking installed at City Hall. And the Sergeant at Arms is being incredibly helpful. That says something.

Inside the building, street safety, better biking and sensible transit are making huge strides too. Late last month a slate of legislation and resolutions aimed at putting meat on the bones of Mayor de Bla-

sio’s ambitious Vision Zero agenda sailed through committee hearings and passed a full vote with ease.

Ten years ago, the sentiment behind these bills existed solely in New York City’s advocacy community. Five years ago, most of this legislation would never have made it off a desk. “Three years ago,” Council Member David Greenfield told *Reclaim*, “when I introduced the first resolution calling for a lower speed limit, people thought I was crazy.” Last month, a City Council resolution calling on Albany to lower the speed limit to 25 mph passed with 46 ‘yes’ votes, four ‘no’ votes and one abstention.

So what has changed? Where is all of this energy coming from? And more importantly, where is it going? Over the past few months, *Reclaim* reached out to more than a dozen New York City Council members to ask those questions. This is what we heard.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?



Ydanis Rodriguez, who serves as Transportation Committee Chair and represents Washington Heights

“The City has realized that all the competitive urban areas in different parts of the world have been making improvements to protect cyclists and pedestrians. They see how important it is to take the city to that level, to be a role model. We know we need to create a community where everyone should interact in a better way when it comes to our streets.”

Council Member Ben Kallos, who represents the Upper East Side

“Campaign finance reform and term limits have allowed a new class of progressives in 2013. There is now a progressive caucus with 19 members. That’s nearly double what it was. We are seeing more members of the Council who run and bike and use public transit. So at the end of the day, it’s that campaign finance and term limits have empowered voters to elect people that are truly representative.”

Council Member Steve Levin, who represents Williamsburg and Greenpoint

“The Council’s increasingly progressive approach to street safety and transportation issues is the result of more than a decade of advocacy from groups like Transportation Alternatives. Also, I believe in giving credit where credit is due: Mayor Bloomberg certainly helped set the stage for a lot of what is happening now.”

Council Member James Vacca, who represents the eastern Bronx

“I think there has been a realization that the status quo can’t continue; that ‘these things happen’ is no longer a reasonable response. These things affect people’s lives and the fabric of our communities.”

Council Member Helen Rosenthal, who represents Manhattan’s Upper West Side

“As a former community board chair, I feel like a lot of what’s happening now has been in the works at the community level for a long time.”



COUNCIL MEMBER YDANIS RODRIGUEZ.

Council Member David Greenfield, who represents Bensonhurst, Borough Park and Midwood

“The murder rate has declined, but the pedestrian death rate has gone up. People said the murder rate could not go down, and it did. That’s what we’re doing with street safety. It is a luxury of sorts to have such a low crime rate. Now that crime is lower, we can have conversations about other issues.”



COUNCIL MEMBERS DAVID GREENFIELD, JIMMY VAN BRAMER, LAURIE CUMBO AND STEVE LEVIN.

WHAT'S YOUR TOP PRIORITY?



City Council Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer, who represents Sunnyside, Woodside, Long Island City and Astoria

“We can’t have any child—any person—die because we as a group were afraid to get a ticket. When people are speeding they should get a ticket. When they run lights, they should get a ticket. There’s no complaining when you break the law.”

Council Member Rosenthal

“We need the police to really pull over people who are speeding, who are failing to yield, who are on their phone, who are running red lights. And at a serious crash, before a summons is issued, we need traffic investigators to do their work, to look at injuries. I am very persuaded by the Council asking for 1,000 more officers.”

Council Member Rodriguez

“We need to change our culture when it comes to how pedestrians and drivers interact. I hope that everyone understands that having a car crash is preventable. Everyone should be accountable. We need to make a change in our culture. The motorists are the most responsible. That power comes with a big responsibility.”

Council Member Costa Constantinides, who represents Astoria

“Safer streets are my top transportation priority. We’ve been very outspoken about making 21st Street safer. Commissioner Trottenberg was here. Make Queens Safer, Congressman Crowley, the NYPD, many of the key stakeholders have sat down together. We’ve made 21st Street pedestrian safety a high priority in this office. It was the first issue we talked about in this office. Getting milk should not be a life-threatening challenge.”

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE?



Council Member Constantinides

“Time. So much of this work takes time but we really need the changes now. The challenges we’re facing—we’re trying to implement improvements in a way that’s quick but also good policy.”

Council Member Vacca

“It’s enforcement. We can always stress speed limits, but there is an enforcement aspect that we can’t underestimate. What is our level of commitment to enforcement? We have to decide if it’s real and if we’re willing to prioritize it. I think that is key. It transcends DOT or NYPD and becomes a societal issue. Are we willing to enforce life-saving laws?”

The other challenge is that we have to improve mass transit. We have to get people out of cars. I represent a community where mass transit options are few and far between. People take the bus or drive to a train, and we need to do better for them. Express buses aren’t express. They get stuck in the same traffic. Where is the express? I want them to be an alternative to train use. You have to get people access. We need to look at Select Bus Service lanes to Manhattan, real dedicated lanes.”



COUNCIL MEMBERS HELEN ROSENTHAL, BEN KALLOS, CARLOS MENCHACA AND ANTONIO REYNOSO.

Council Member Greenfield

“The biggest challenge is Albany. It’s the legislator in Buffalo. These guys don’t live here and they don’t understand what we need. I’m not going to legislate in Buffalo. I’ve visited once, but I wouldn’t dare legislate. In many of these places, they don’t even have sidewalks. And I think there’s always a tendency for those who have the power to not give it up. It’s certainly not logic. If we had the ability to make our own laws in New York City, this wouldn’t be a problem.”

Council Member Levin

“Albany and funding are obvious challenges; staying power is another crucial component. We need a real cultural shift to make a lot of behaviors part of every New Yorker’s mindset.”

Majority Leader Van Bramer

“I think political will is always a challenge. Some of these are hard from a political perspective. There are still moments that confront elected officials that are not easy votes for a variety of reasons, but these have to be votes of conscience. These votes are about more than politics and more than the moment, they are about saving lives.”

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PUBLIC SPACE

The Play Streets Tradition Turns 100



THE CITY'S LONGSTANDING CUSTOM of summertime street closures is about to celebrate its 100th birthday with more events, a simplified application process and a level of Administration support unequaled in decades.

The Play Streets program, which was started by the Police Athletic League in 1914, has been empowering communities in the five boroughs to take control of their neighborhood streets for generations. Millions of kids, families and communities have turned the unofficial backyard of every New Yorker—the street—into an official place for play, music, conversation and fun.

Transportation Alternatives has been supporting the Play Streets program for years, spreading the word that temporary street closures are possible and help-

ing interested groups work through the permit application process and plan successful events. Now, the Mayor's office has really gotten behind the program, cutting the permit time from three to five months down to just 30 days.

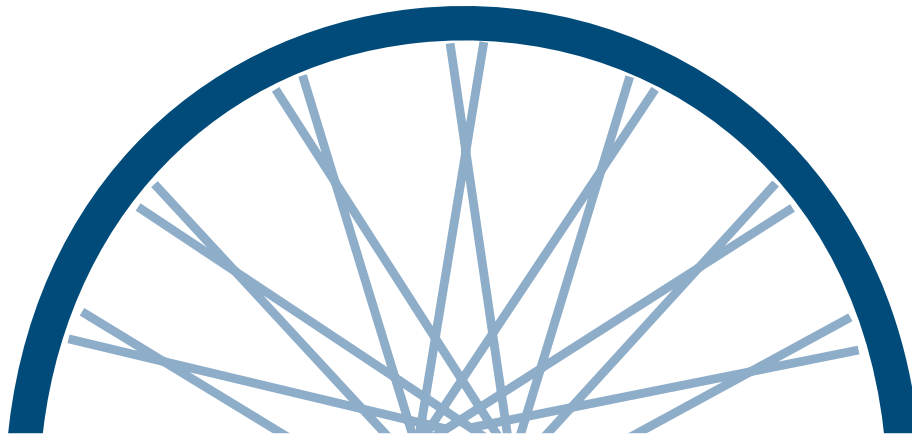
This year, the city is on track to see the largest application pool ever.

"Summer Play Streets are an important resource to provide additional recreational space and free programming for children in New York City neighborhoods without sufficient recreation facilities," said Marco Carrion, the Commissioner of the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit. "With the commitment of the volunteer neighborhood organizations that sponsor and supervise Summer Play Streets, city children have more access to healthy physical

activity and areas to play protected from the danger of traffic."

For schools and community groups with insufficient active play spaces, Play Streets open up streets for physical activity, benefiting students and local residents. Play Streets help address the city's childhood obesity epidemic, while also allowing children and families to meet and get to know neighbors.

"We're thrilled that the Mayor's office is really pushing to cut the red tape and offer more support for the Play Streets program this year," said Jennifer So Godzeno, T.A.'s Planning Director. "The simple act of closing a street can have a profound impact on individual residents and entire communities." ■



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Adam White has represented injured cyclists, pedestrians and other crash victims for more than fifteen years. Adam has been a Transportation Alternatives member and supporter since 1995, and serves on the Legal Affairs Committee of the League of American Bicyclists. He is an avid cyclist and long-time bike commuter.

Steve Vaccaro has litigated personal injury cases for cyclists, pedestrians and others for over fifteen years. He also handles employment and civil rights disputes. Steve has served on the Advisory Council of Transportation Alternatives since its inception, as the Chair of T.A.'s East Side Committee, and as Advocacy Coordinator for the Five Borough Bicycle Club.

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SAFE STREETS

The Fight for Slow Streets Is Speeding Up



BELKYS RIVERA SHARES HER SON'S TRAGIC STORY WITH ASSEMBLY MEMBER CARMEN ARROYO.

ON MAY 6TH, FAMILIES FOR SAFE Streets, Transportation Alternatives and a pair of powerful New York City Council members headed north to talk to State Legislators in Albany about life-saving laws that could keep New Yorkers safe.

In total, more than 150 committed activists had more than 50 meetings, urging lawmakers to pass legislation that would let New York City lower its default speed limit to 25 mph. The law would also empower DOT to lower the speed limit to 20 mph with signs only, when previously such a reduction would require traffic-calming measures. Though life-saving engineering enhance-

ments are always a good thing, freeing the City from brick-and-mortar requirements will allow it to lower the speed limit in more neighborhoods in less time.

After the lobby day, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, one of the most powerful officials in the state, became the lead cosponsor of the bill. As of this writing, the legislation has yet to be passed, but advocates and elected officials are working tirelessly to ensure New Yorkers get a safer speed limit.

If that weren't news enough, just days before the trip, and after years of T.A. advocacy, the State Assembly and the State Senate passed legislation allowing

New York City to install 120 new speed cameras in school zones throughout the five boroughs.

Automated enforcement cameras are a proven tool in the fight for safer streets, significantly reducing overall traffic speeds, particularly for drivers traveling 15 mph or more over the speed limit. A study in the *British Medical Journal* found that speed cameras reduced the number of traffic deaths in a test corridor in London from 68 to 20, and the number of serious injuries fell by over a quarter, from 813 to 596, in just two years.

The City's Department of Transportation is also accelerating its efforts to slow speeds. Taking aim at the City's big, broad and dangerous thoroughfares, it has started an "arterial slow zone" campaign.

Along seven miles of Atlantic Avenue, from Furman Street in Brooklyn Heights to 76th Street in Woodhaven, the agency will lower the speed limit to 25 mph, increase speed enforcement and install life-saving engineering enhancements.

"We can have a smooth traffic flow of vehicles without having a reckless and senseless traffic flow of blood," said Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams at a press conference announcing the changes.

In addition to the Atlantic Avenue arterial slow zone, the DOT has installed similar treatments on Broadway, McGuinness Boulevard and the Grand Concourse. Up next are, East Gun Hill Road, Southern Boulevard, Canal Street, Jamaica Avenue, Northern Boulevard, Queens Boulevard, Rockaway Boulevard, Forest Avenue and Eastern Parkway.

T.A. member and Families for Safe Streets cofounder Amy Cohen, whose son Sammy was killed by a van last fall, also spoke at the Atlantic Avenue launch event. "Today's announcement is a positive step," she said, "however, it is only a first step. I have come here today to remind everyone of the urgency of this work." ■

Continue the conversation on Twitter
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Partner Daniel Flanzig serves on the Board of Directors of the New York Bicycle Coalition where he is a member of the Board's Legal Advisory committee. Daniel is also the founder and Chairperson of the New York State Trial Lawyers Bicycle Litigation Sub-Committee.

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THESE KIDS KNOW THERE IS PLENTY OF SPACE ON THE GRAND CONCOURSE FOR BIKES, FAMILIES AND FUN.

PUBLIC SPACE

Boogie on the Boulevard Is Back

A GRAND OLD TRADITION IS COMING back to the Bronx. After an 18-year hiatus, Boogie on the Boulevard—a car-free celebration of community, culture and healthy living—will return to the Grand Concourse this summer.

Scheduled for the first three Sundays in August (the 3rd, 10th and 17th), the event will close the Grand Concourse's center lanes to automotive traffic between 165th Street and 167th Street so that neighbors and visitors of all ages can talk, play, dance to live music, take a free exercise class or participate in interactive art exhibits.

"Having this is a no brainer; it brings about a sense of community," said José Rodríguez, the District Manager of the local community board. "Folks will see what will be happening and be compelled to participate, because it's such a positive

thing. I am extremely excited and I look forward to what the future holds."

Boogie on the Boulevard was started by then-Borough President Fernando Ferrer in 1991. On every Sunday from July through November, the center lanes of the Grand Concourse were closed for more than three miles, allowing people from the community to walk, bike and enjoy one of New York City's great thoroughfares.

Mayor Giuliani, who claimed that the closure slowed emergency vehicle response times, ended it in 1996. Political insiders, however, believe Boogie on the Boulevard was a victim of its own success: Because it was wildly popular and closely associated with one of Giuliani's political rivals, it had to go.

Regardless of the Machiavellian maneuvering that may have undone

the great event, thanks to the efforts of Transportation Alternatives' Bronx Activist Committee, Bronx Community Board 4, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, a handful of community groups and more than 1,500 people who signed a petition in favor of the event, Boogie on the Boulevard is back.

"City streets are the backyard of millions of New Yorkers. It's fantastic to see neighbors get together, listen to music, dance, talk and just have fun," said T.A.'s Field Organizing Manager Jill Guidera. "Play Streets, Summer Streets, Weekend Walks, Boogie on the Boulevard: these are simultaneously incredible one-off community events and part of a much larger movement of New Yorkers rethinking and reclaiming their streets." ■

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ACTIVIST COMMITTEE UPDATES

Dispatches from the Front

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES' ACTIVIST COMMITTEES HOST MONTHLY MEETINGS, SOCIAL OUTINGS AND SUPPORT VIBRANT ONLINE COMMUNITIES. THEY ALSO MAKE FIGHTING FOR LOCAL STREET IMPROVEMENTS A LOT OF FUN.

MANHATTAN

The Manhattan Activist Committee is in the middle of a major growth spurt, averaging ten new members at every meeting since last fall. All that new blood, combined with a core of seasoned volunteers, is getting results. There has been a flurry of activity as activists worked hard to bring in as many coalition letters as possible to support a big legislative push in Albany. Mary Beth Kelly, an esteemed safe streets leader and Upper West Sider, helped secure the endorsement of the entire Mount Sinai Hospital Network. Other activists have been hitting the streets and schools, collecting hundreds of physical petition signatures from individuals and thousands more online. The 5th and 6th Forward Campaign is also seeing some inspiring momentum. After years of grassroots advocacy, the DOT has announced that it plans to begin a study of the central thoroughfares this fall. Uptown, a group of committed safe streets advocates are now forming a group in Northern Manhattan to fight for equity in safe streets infrastructure.

MEETS

WHEN: First Thursday of every month
6:30 – 8 pm
WHERE: Transportation Alternatives
127 W. 26th Street, 10th Floor
(Chelsea)
CONTACT: Albert Ahronheim, Co-Chair
aahronheim@aol.com

STATEN ISLAND

The Staten Island Activist Committee has been busy working the corridors of power lately. After winning Council Member Debbie Rose's support of the Richmond Terrace traffic-calming campaign earlier this year, they secured

the backing of Assembly Member Matthew Titone for that campaign, as well as an effort on Forest Avenue. Activist Committee members also attended a local NYPD TrafficStat meeting to learn more about how Vision Zero is being enforced on the Island. But it hasn't been all work and no play: the Committee enjoyed an incredibly successful Tour de Staten Island, with more participants and more fun than ever before.

MEETS

WHEN: Third Thursday of every month
6:30 – 8 pm
WHERE: Everything Goes Book Cafe
208 Bay Street (St. George)
CONTACT: Laura Barlament, Chair
lbarlament@gmail.com

BROOKLYN

The Brooklyn Activist Committee and its 600 members have been working hard these last few months. Their Atlantic Avenue campaign received the blessing of Community Board 2, an excellent summary of their Jay Street workshop efforts is now making the rounds, and they're moving forward with their ambitious Safety Forum schedule in Bushwick and Williamsburg. They've also been turning out support for Albany lobby efforts, Vision Zero workshops and fun and educational events around the borough.

MEETS

WHEN: Last Thursday of every month
7 – 8:30 pm
WHERE: Brooklyn YWCA
30 Third Avenue
First Floor Meeting Room
(Cobble Hill)
CONTACT: Dave 'Paco' Abraham, Chair
dave.paco.abraham@gmail.com

THE BRONX

The Bronx Activist Committee has been busy working to make Westchester Avenue safer and more convenient for pedestrians and bus riders. After months of effort, lots of petition signatures and some great presentations, they gained the local community board's support. Now the DOT is installing sidewalk extensions that'll make crossing a dangerous intersection a lot simpler and also give bus riders a better place to wait. In other Uptown news, the Bronx and Manhattan Activist Committees have joined forces to advocate for a bike network connecting neighborhoods along the Harlem River to one another and to the citywide bike network. A well-designed and connected series of lanes using the Harlem River bridges as a spine will revolutionize transportation in these communities.

MEETS

WHEN: Second Wednesday of every month
6:30 – 8 pm
WHERE: Bronx Museum of Art
1040 Grand Concourse
CONTACT: Rich Gans, Co-Chair
Elizabeth Hamby, Co-Chair
bronx@transalt.org

QUEENS

After hosting a site visit with Queens DOT, the Department of City Planning, Community Board 1 and many coalition partners, the Queens Activist Committee has secured a green light on a traffic study for 21st Street. The DOT has indicated that it will start vehicle counts this summer and return to the local community boards this fall with recommendations. There's also been good news on the Queens Boulevard front: The full board of CB 6 passed a resolution in favor of a study, and the Transportation Committee of CB 2 did the same. Similar energy is building in Jackson Heights and Corona, where the Committee has been busy organizing a Vision Zero workshop.

MEETS

WHEN: Second Tuesday of every month
6:30 – 8 pm
WHERE: Queens Pride House
76-11 37th Avenue
(Jackson Heights)
CONTACT: Steve Scofield, Co-Chair
stevsco@gmail.com



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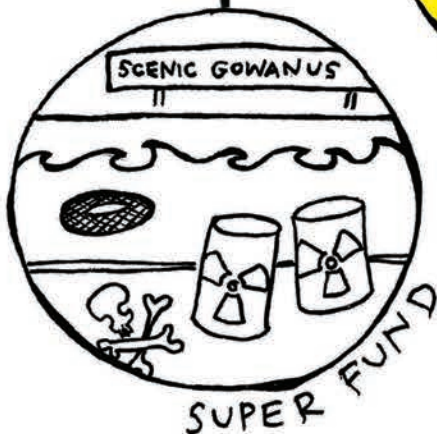
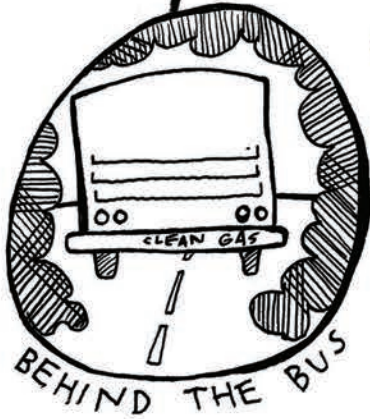
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PARTNER PROFILE

Brooklyn Roasting Company

Can you tell us about the early days of Brooklyn Roasting Company?

CO-FOUNDER MICHAEL POLLACK: We started in Jim's Williamsburg apartment in 2009. He was roasting beans and selling them under the name Brooklyn Roasting to a few wholesale customers. I heard about the company online and reached out to them and expressed my interest. They said they were just about to post an ad for a summer intern, so that's how I got started alongside Jim and our other partner Emily. That was in May of 2010. That September, we bought a roaster from a company in California. We were roasting about 200 pounds a week. As we approach our fourth birthday this year, we roast about

15,000-18,000 pounds a week and have about 62 people who work with us. It's been a fantastic trip.

How did you build a relationship with T.A.?

When we started, we delivered by bicycle—a cargo bike. We really like the biking community. I'm not even sure anymore where our relationship with T.A. came from. Anyway, at some point they asked us to be part of the Bike Ambassador Program. They wanted to hand out our coffee along with the printed materials encouraging better relationships between drivers and bikers and walkers. Since we cycle and support many things alternative, including transportation, it was a no brainer. From then

on, we've partnered on some bike lights, contributed coffee to a handful of parties and also to the Bike to Work Day events. We love the work T.A. does, and we love being part of that community.

In front of your café in DUMBO, there's always a sea of bikes. Is there a connection between coffee and cycling? I think there's an appreciation. Coffee is in some ways fuel, and people who cycle seem to like that. Perhaps there is also a European cultural element too? Whatever it is, we've been begging the DOT for more racks for all the bikes. In the last three months, they added something like 50 new ones and they're already always full, so we need at least 50 more. ■



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